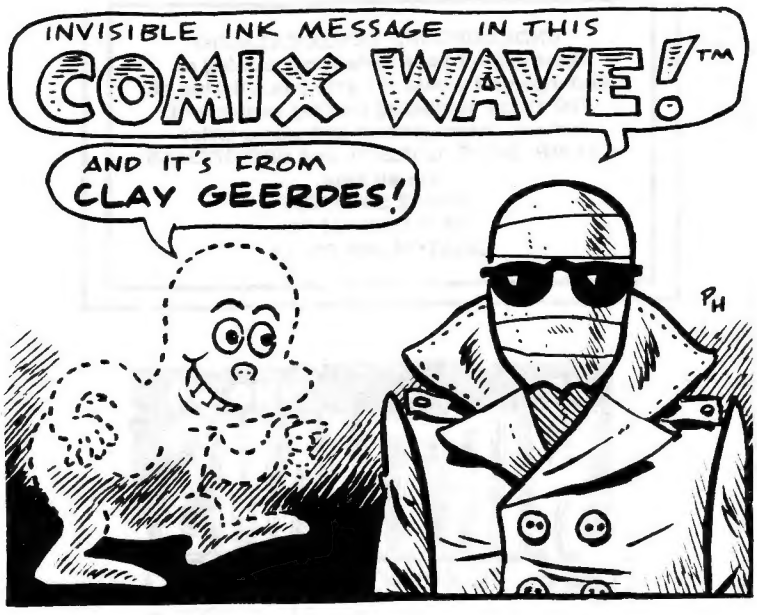
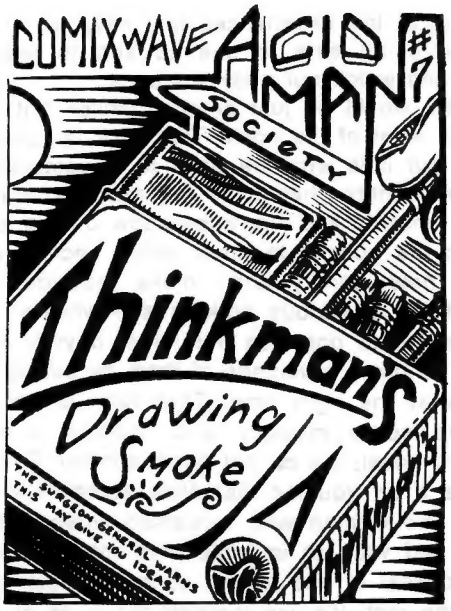




COMIX WAVE 62. May, 1988. ©Clay Geerdes, Box 7081, Berkeley, California 94707. All Rights Reserved. Membership is $7.50 a year. 12 issues of this newsletter are included.

INVISIBILITY

I thought about sending out a blank sheet of paper and calling this my invisibility issue, then I thought, no, nobody would get it. I'd just get a lot of letters saying, hey, Clay, jeez, I got a blank one, wouldja send me another copy. Then I thought about writing it with lemon juice, you know, the old invisible ink trip from World War 2 where you have to heat the paper in order to read the coded message, but I *KNEW* that would never work out and I was too lazy to do it anyway, so I guess I'll just have to write about invisibility directly and forget the symbolism. This whole thing was stimulated by H. F. Saint's first novel, **MEMOIRS OF AN INVISIBLE MAN**, which gives a nod here and there to H. G. Wells' **INVISIBLE MAN** (1897), but is far beyond that speculative work in dealing with the real problems inherent in being unseen. Saint's character, Nick, is made invisible in an industrial accident and finds himself hunted by some government heavies who want him for a guinea pig. He can't go back to his own place and he has to develop a lifestyle in line with his new reality. Saint gets into the fantasy in a way Wells never did, because he stays inside his character and deals with the physical problems of being invisible, whereas Wells was more concerned with the metaphysical, turning his Griffin into a power-hungry maniac who saw himself becoming Invisible Man The First, a King. Nick is more down to earth. How do you shave if you can't see your face? How can you get around the streets when people can't see you and are liable to run into you at any moment? How do you eat in public when the food is visible going through your intestines? Where do you live when you can't rent an apartment anywhere or deal with people directly. How do you keep from going crazy with loneliness since you can see people you always know but don't dare talk to them or let them know you are there?

Invisibility was a big deal when I was a kid, because we had just seen the movie or one of its several sequels and we were all having fantasies about being invisible and hanging out in the girl's shower room at the high school or being able to stroll in and out of a grocery store or drugstore carrying anything we wanted, which would have been candy bars and comic books and boxes of cereals with comic character pins in them. It never occured to us as it does to Nick that those things would have been seen floating through the air and chaos would have resulted.

In the Sunday papers, Russell Stamm's **INVISIBLE SCARLET O'NEILL** could disappear just by rubbing her wrist with her fingertips. Clothes and all, she was gone. There is a character who must have made the colorist happy. All they did with Scarlet was leave out the color when she was invisible.Walter Gibson's SHADOW was not an invisible man. He was merely one who could hypnotize one or more people into thinking he was invisible. Gibson gave him the power to "cloud men's minds so that they could not see him."THE SHADOW was a detective and he worked with a woman named Margo Lane. Man-woman teams were popular during this period and THE SHADOW led to Nick and Nora Charles in THE THIN MAN series written by Dashiell Hammett and to Perry Mason and Della Street in Erle Stanley Gardner's still-running series about a lawyer and his secretary.

On screen, Jon Hall unwrapped the bandages from his face and there was nothing there. Drinking glasses and cigarettes floated through the air and furniture tipped over and you knew it was because he was on the scene. Henry George Wells wrote the story of the first invisible man in 1897 and it was onscreen by the 1930s. Once the guys in Hollywood learned how to do all those special effects, there were more magic characters up there than you could shake a stick at. There were Angels and ghosts all over the place, but we never thought about the actual experience of being invisible until Saint came along and wrote his **MEMOIRS OF AN INVISIBLE MAN**. We just thought it would be neat to be able to see other people without their being able to see us. We forgot that we wouldn't be able to see our own hands or feet and even Saint doesn't work out the problem of how a man with invisible eyes can see anything, though he works out most of the other logistics.

MEMOIRS is a well-written study of alienation. Invisibility is really a metaphor for our time, since most of us have experienced it in our over-populated cities where we tend to drift into anonymity as soon as we hit the sidewalk. I had a strange experience some years ago when I was in Canada. I was walking into the zoo when the gates opened and hundreds of people started to come out. Nothing unusual about that except that *not a single one of those people made eye contact with me, not even for a second.* I felt completely invisible. It was as though I didn't exist at all. In the United States, we are used to making eye contact on the street, and it never occured to me that there were places where that didn't happen. After awhile I got used to it, but I still felt a bit uncomfortable. This is why I understand Nick's experience

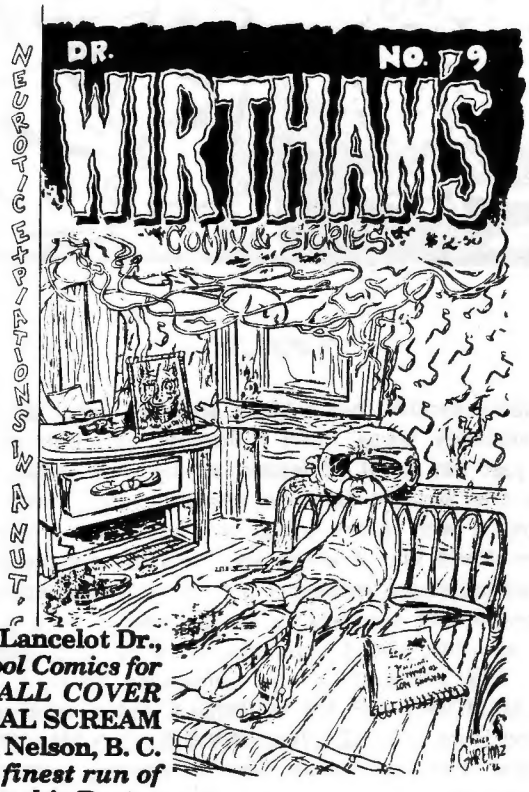
so well. Most of the experiences that keep us human involve other people being able to see us and to read our facial expressions and watch our body language.

MEMOIRS would be just another thriller if it were not for the emotional level of the book. That Nick is hunted maintains the tension, but it is what he does to re-establish his life, to invent a new identity, that holds the reader's interest. Nick is a securities analyst and his knowledge of the stock market coupled with his access to inner office secrets enables him to create a new identity and make that identity rich. He visits the offices of various brokers and wheeler dealers and finds out the inside dope on the latest buyout and takeover scams, then he takes advantage of them by buying some of the critical stock at the right time. That Nick is not a detective out to solve some mystery and capture a stock villain enhances this novel; we do not need another Shadow or Nick Carter. I was a bit troubled that Alice accepted Nick so easily and I found the woman who screamed when she discovered she was in bed with an invisible man more realistic, but it's hard to be critical of one aspect of a complete fantasy while you accept the rest. It's like learning the rules of a game and being upset when someone chooses to change one of them mid-game. Nick meets Alice at a party and she thinks he is a ghost, but they go to her place and Nick winds up wintering there. She is at first incredulous, then fascinated, then simply accepting of her invisible fiance. The climax is very well done and I think you'll like the ending which I'll leave undisturbed for you as a good writer should.

CLAY GEERDES

NOTE / TOM BERGER HAS ON BEING INVISIBLE! I JUST SAW IT. C.G.

UNDERGROUND COMIX CATALOG
Once again I have revised my catalog of underground comix. $1 gets you a listing of 700 titles, including reading copies and rarities, 'homegrowns' and major titles. CRUMB, BODE, CORBEN, and SPIEGELMAN are all here.
BRUCE SWEENEY
85 WALTHAM #5
BOSTON, MA 02118



COMIX PLUGOLA

POCKET COMICS 1-3 for a buck/.39 stamp from Victor Gates, 552 Lancelot Dr., North Salt Lake, Utah 84050.* *Get the latest catalog from High School Comics for an SASE, 656 Birch Lane, Gilbert, MN. Their newest is ALL ALL COVER COMICS #1.* ODD STORIES, TRUE BARBARIAN TALES, and REAL SCREAM COMICS go for 1.50/.39 each from Mike Culpepper, 808 Stanley St., Nelson, B. C. V1L 1N7. *From Renegade, ROSCOE 4, WORDSMITH 12, and the finest run of Sherlock Holmes yet drawn. Dan Day's series is up to #11. More Graphic Poetry in PUMA BLUES 14 from Aardvark-Vanaheim. S. CLAY WILSON will be signing autographs and hanging out with The Checkered Demon Band on April 1 at Russell Ketter's newly opened RATHER RIPPED RECORDS, 1975 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, Ca 94704. 848-5900. *This year's SAN DIEGO COMICON is August 4-7. Information from POB 17066, San Diego, CA 92117.** Two new issues of Clifford Neal's DR. WIRTHAM'S COMIX AND STORIES, 378 Judson, Mystic, CT 06355. $3.50 pp each. Good sex art from Neal, Watson, and others. Keeping the E-C tradition alive.* *In case you missed it, Hunt Emerson has illustrated LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER. Mellors greets the lady in the panels below. Ask your dealer about this one. I suspect Last Gasp distributes it in this country.***

BABYFAT 60

Art by Par Holman, David Miller, Valentino, Ric Sloane and Brad Foster.

75 cents postpaid from Clay/Box 7081/Berkeley 94707

YES, DO STOP CRYING... HERE'S SIXPENCE - RUN ALONG AND BUY YOURSELF ANOTHER CAT...
OH, GOODY! I KNOW JUST WHAT SORT OF A CAT I WANT!
gasp!
LCL-9-NE

Robert Pasternak's
ACID MAN 5, 6, & 7
$2 pp for all three minis from Clay/7081/Berkeley 94707.

DORI SEDA 1951-1988

Underground cartoonist Dori Seda died on February 26, 1988. WIMMEN'S COMIX #13 will be dedicated to her.